WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

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REPLY TO THE "OCCIDENT."

The "*Occident*" is a Presbyterian journal, published at San Francisco. Its issue of March 9th has for its leading editorial an article entitled "Presbyterial Action Needed." It makes a bitter attack upon the editor of this magazine, and a loud demand upon the Presbytery, of which he is a member, to deal summarily with his case. The issue was mailed to all the leading members of that Presbytery. No copy, however, was sent to us. At least none was received. This lack of courtesy was made up by a call from a brother of that Presbytery who showed us the article, and loaned us his copy.

The writer assails us on three grounds: 1. The heretical teaching of the magazine. 2. The dishonesty of our position in remaining in the Presbyterian Church while holding and teaching views inconsistent with its standards. 3. Our wholesale slander of the brethren.

1. As to the first point, the editor declines any discussion of our views on Scripture grounds. His language is:

"We do not care to discuss the question whether Rev. Mr. Baker's views are in accordance with Scripture or not. That is not the question. We all profess to believe that the Confession of Faith, and the catechism of our church contain the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. The only question, therefore, which it is needful to discuss, is, whether Mr.

Baker's views are now consistent with the doctrinal standards of the church, which he once professed to receive, and which all Presbyterian ministers are required to receive."

An independent minister of this city, who, not long ago, seceded from the Presbyterian church, made this remark to us: "The trouble with your position is that you think everything must be proved from the Bible." We accept this definition of our case, and confess ourselves as having no heart for any controversy about our teachings that takes us off the direct ground of Scripture. We affirm, however, as to this point, that the Westminster Confession itself makes the Scriptures to be our *ultimate* standards —"the only rule of faith and practice." We have it, moreover, from high authority, that the slight changes in the verbiage of our Form of Government, introduced into the Revised Book of Discipline, Chap. I, Secs. 3 and 4, were made with this end in view, that nothing should be declared to be a heresy by the church which cannot be proved to be such by the Word of God, and that in any trial involving this issue, the final appeal must be to the Scriptures. Those sections, as amended, now read: "An offence is anything, in the *doctrine* (the word 'doctrine' does not occur in the old book), principles or practice of a church member, officer or judicatory, which is contrary to the Word of God." "Nothing shall, therefore, be the object of judicial process, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the Holy Scriptures, or to the regulations and practice of the church founded thereon." The last sentence appears ambiguous, because of the two classes of offences referred to, the one involving doctrine, the

other, conduct. We are assured, however, that the changes in these two sections were designed to confirm that principle, hitherto disputed, that a mere divergence from the Confession is not enough to prove a heresy in the Presbyterian Church, but that the Church is bound to hear and to decide the issue on the ground of proof offered as to whether it is or is not "contrary to the Holy Scriptures." That this is the right position, appears also in the fact that the Church recognizes it as the constitutional right of any member to move for an amendment of the Standards,—as we have done. She has never assumed that they could not themselves be brought to the test of Scripture.

Precluded, as we are, by the *Occident* writer from answering his attack upon Scriptural grounds, we can only say that at no single point of his arraignment has he fairly stated our views. As to the deviations he specifies in our doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, the atonement, justification and sanctification, he confesses as to the main point—the atonement—that "we do not sustain this charge by quotation, because we find nothing quotable in his article on the 'Forgiveness of Sins,' unless we quote more than our space will allow." He infers, however, from reading the whole article, and from other utterances of ours, that we do not agree with the standards at this vital point, nor as to "the prime object in the salvation of the elect, which is to save them not only from sin, but from all its penal consequences, including the punishment of hell."

That article was designed to present that aspect of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which opposes itself

to the delusion that men may continue in sin, and grace will abound. Every one knows how easy it is to select passages from the very best writers upon this many-sided subject, to which objection may be made as inconsistent with what is true on other sides. We can simply say that, upon all these vital themes of the gospel, we class ourselves as an orthodox of the orthodox. We do not believe, indeed, that the whole round of truth upon these great themes can be contained within any human formulas. But as to our system of doctrine upon these subjects, we accept it at all vital points. It is an utter surprise to us that anyone familiar with our writings could accuse us of denying the propitiatory value of our Lord's sacrifice, or that he died to save His people, not only from sin, but from its penal consequences, including the punishment of hell.

It is, however, against our eschatological teaching that the accusation bears most strongly. We have no disposition to conceal our deviation at this point, as we shall hereafter explain. We protest, however, against the unfairness of this accuser's charges. He implies that, while we reject the form in which the doctrine of future punishment is stated in our Standards, we oppose the doctrine itself. All the punishment of the wicked he recognizes us as teaching, is this: "The only fate of the wicked is their inferior and long-delayed recovery through resurrection." On the contrary, no man in the church has held forth more earnestly or constantly the Scriptural doctrine of hell as an immediate doom. We have repeatedly opposed the Andover teaching, because it tends to encourage in sinful men the hope

of further teaching and trial in an intermediate state, and so conceals from them the hell that now yawns beneath them. Instead of denying the words of Scripture concerning this fearful peril, or concealing them behind a veil of metaphor, we have insisted that they refer to an impending destruction of body and soul in the devouring pit of those forces which have built up man in embodied life, and which must overtake all whose life is not rooted and grounded in Christ. We have sought to rescue this doctrine, indeed, from traditional accretions, which have so disfigured it, that it has largely died out of the preaching of the church, or has been supplanted by humanly devised substitutes. But it has been in order to reaffirm its true Scriptural significancc, and to hold it up before men in the warning light in which it is presented in our Saviour's words. In the first numbers of this magazine we stated that the church is in great need of a true working doctrine of future punishment, which none of us shall shrink from fearlessly proclaiming. We refer to the article, "Hell in Modern Preaching," in the October No. of Vol. I, as an instance of the constant testimony of this magazine to the doctrine of a real future punishment awaiting sinful men, going far beyond the negative view attributed to us by the *Occident.*

But is this punishment to be the everlasting torment of the sinner in body and soul, without intermission, by the devil and his angels in hell-fire? And is this eternal agony, in which the lost soul is plunged at death, to be duplicated at the resurrection, the body being raised up to be joined to the soul in this ceaseless torment?

This the Confession explicitly teaches. This is all it is able to discern in that provision of God's economy of redemption which secures that, as in Adam all have died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Here we have joined issue with the Confession. And this brings us to consider the count in the *Occident's* indictment that "he differs from the standards on the doctrine of the resurrection." This is the "*fons et origio* of all his vagaries." Here we plead guilty. We do assert—we are perfectly convinced—that the framers of our standards were betrayed into a radical mistake when they shut their eyes to all that class of Scripture teaching—the roots of which lie deep in the Old Testament—which make resurrection, to all the subjects of it, essentially a deliverance, and a fulfilment of the great germinal promise that in the Christ all the families of the earth should be blessed. This led them to locate our Saviour's words about being cast into hell (Mark ix., etc.,) about coming judgment (Matt. xxv., 31–46), and such passages as 2 Thess. 1. 9, which speak of an "eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power," as descriptive of a punishment inflicted *after* the resurrection. * Whereas, it is manifest, from a close study of these passages, that they refer either to punishments which overtake men on the earth, or to a pit of destruction into which they are cast at death. The risen dead come to view, indeed, in two passages referred to, viz.: Jno. v. 29 and Rev. xx. 12. But the passages which mainly furnish the phrases from

* See proof-texts under pages 168, 169, and under Question 89, Larger Catechism.

which our formulas on this subject are made up, do not primarily relate to a post-resurrection judgment at all. The sinner, in the Bible view, enters upon the just punishment of his sins long before his resurrection.

As to the charge that we believe resurrection to be "eclectic and progressive," we have only to say that some of the best men in the Presbyterian Church hold to the doctrine of a "first resurrection." The last two Moderators of the General Assembly are among the number.* And a wiser man even than they has told us "Every man in his own order," and "to every seed his own body."

Many of our brethren agree also with us in believing that our Lord began to judge the world in righteousness, according to his words, before that generation passed away. Because, however, we deny that the purpose of God in raising the unjust dead is to punish them for the deeds done in the body,† but hold that they

* See note on the "First Resurrection," by Dr. E. R. Craven, in Lange's Commentary on the Apocalypse, p. 354. What will the *Occident* say, too, to this extract from the *Presbyterian*, which has just come to hand, with a leading editorial on "Easter," in which occur the words, "Furthermore, the risen Lord is to us the pledge and type of our own rising from the grave. The fact is set forth to us as the prelude of successive resurrections, through which the passing generations of the sons of God shall enter upon Christ's glory."

† We ask attention here to the fact that the much-quoted passage, 2d Cor. v. 10, which reads literally: "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things in (or through) the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad," is addressed to *Christians*. The trial referred to is not to determine their salvation, but their place and reward as stewards and servants of Christ. It is not improbable, too, that the phrase, διὰ τοῦ σώματος, refers to the fact that the resurrection body must gather up and express the fruitage of the present life. At all events, a study of this passage in its connection ought to greatly modify the decisive tone with which it is constantly quoted, as shutting out all hope from the resurrection of the unjust.

enter upon their punishment long before, it is unjust to infer that we do not believe that the wicked dead receive their just deserts. No one can hold to this, as required by both the law of Nature and the law of God, more strongly than do we.

The gist, however, of this critic's charge lies in his italicised assertion that we "teach, contrary to the standards, the *future final recovery and salvation of all men* by resurrection." If by "salvation" he means that good gift of God, which we all designate by that term, then we do not believe what is here attributed to us, and we certainly have not taught it. The leading article in one of our earlier numbers, (March, 1885,) is entitled, "Our doctrine, not Universalism." We have been careful in every number to discriminate between the gift of a recovered life to the race through the Second Man, and the gift of eternal life, which only those receive who believe on His Name unto life everlasting. We have constantly emphasized the fact that the restored life of the unjust is one according to character and fitness, and which leaves them still under trial and judgment, and bondage to corruption, and liable to the second death. We have said that it was plainly taught that some get back to life so loaded with the burden of evil character as to be incapable of forgiveness, and "guilty of eternal sin" (Mark iii. 29, R. V.), and that, after resurrection, there will be those who fall again into the pit of the second death, out of which no resurrection is promised. We deny, therefore, this accusation, and, for proof, refer to any or all the issues of this magazine.

It is impossible, however, for us, in these limits, to

make anything but a brief reply to the various counts in this charge of heretical teaching, or to make anything but meagre allusions to the broad basis the Scriptures furnish for our views. We can only wish that all the readers of this apology, who have not seen the previous volumes of this magazine, would take the trouble to peruse them.

MINISTERIAL HONOR.

On this point our assailant is very vehement. But he is still more mistaken. He says of us:

"He addresses himself to 'leading Presbyterian ministers and others' with a view 'to arouse them to the importance of honest dealing by our church,' etc. Why does he not set them an example of 'honest dealing' by withdrawing from a church whose doctrines he has ceased to believe? Is it the way to commend 'honest dealing' to publish the opinions, but conceal the names of men who are masquerading as Presbyterian ministers, enjoying the honors and emoluments of the church, and at the same time covertly repudiating doctrines which they once solemnly professed to receive? In the interest of common honesty, and of open, square dealing, we demand the names of these men. Let us know who they are. And if either they, or Mr. Baker himself, should longer stand on the order of their going, we demand that, as a matter of 'honest dealing by our church,' their Presbyteries facilitate their departure in the constitutional way."

Here is a double charge of dishonesty: 1. In regard to the anonymous extracts. 2. In regard to our course in remaining the church.

As to the first, we can say that the letters were written, the sympathetic remarks made. They were not marked "private," but knowing the obloquy and sacrifice which one must encounter in our position, we have

regarded it as a matter of gentlemanly honor, to say nothing of Christian courtesy, not to force upon any brother a public declaration, but to leave it entirely with his own conscience. We have spoken out our convictions in obedience to our own sense of duty to God and to the church. They must act as they believe to be right in their situations, as we have done in ours. Every man must stand or fall to his own Master. And One is our Master, even Christ, and we are all brethren.

2. The charge which most pains us here is that of personal dishonesty in remaining in the church. If the miserably low ground is to hold in the Presbyterian church, that it is not a church, a true body of Christ, in which He has set us as members for mutual edification, but only a Christian society, formed to conserve a certain system of doctrine, then we are in a false position. If that be the true bond of union in the body, then we have no place in it. Whenever that shall be affirmed as the ruling idea upon which our church is constituted, we shall at once go out, or submit to be cast out, and lay down this burden of labor and reproach and sacrifice which we have taken up in obedience to our highest convictions of what we owe to the church and to her divine Head. We have believed that our ordination vows bind us to seek the purity and strength of the church by seeking to reform her authorized testimony at a point where we believe she was misled, and at which we have all drifted more or less away from her teaching. We have held that a church's first business was to be perfectly honest and sincere as the appointed witness from God to men, and hat our church is now in a false position, in that she no

longer fairly preaches that "God will raise the wicked dead out of the hell to which they have been doomed, to adjudge them again in body and soul to be punished with unspeakable torments, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell-fire forever." We have been told even by theological Professors that such kind of preaching would empty our churches.* And we know that it has largely died out among us, because we have all ceased to believe that these formulas express the fullest truth about the purposes and dealings of God toward sinful men. Moreover, in the face of the teaching of the standards that men "who have not heard the gospel, and do not know Jesus Christ, and believe in Him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess, neither is their salvation in any other but in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of His body, the church," a large proportion of our very best ministers, among whom was Dr. A. A. Hodge, do not hesitate to admit the salvability of some devout heathen. We have thought that the highest view of ministerial honor and of "honest dealing by the church" required that some one should go forward and seek to compel the church to correct this incongruity. Most gladly would we have shrunk from the burden, but it was put upon us in such a way that we dare not avoid it. We would ask, if every minister who holds views divergent from the Confession is bound in honor to step down and out, how can any mistakes

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* See October number, Presbyterian Review, 1883, p. 738.

ever be corrected? Or what power is left in the church to reform herself? The *Occident* would be surprised to know what depletion our church would suffer if its demand were at once complied with. Moreover, this arraigner of our personal honor should bear in mind that we have not been content merely to speak. We have acted. Soon after we began to publish, we offered this overture in the Presbytery of West Jersey:

"In view of the unformed and varying opinions prevalent in the Church concerning great questions in Eschatology, and in view also of the immense importance which attaches to the testimony of the Church upon matters of such vital interest, in its bearing upon both the good conscience of her ministers and the faith of their hearers, this Presbytery would respectfully petition the General Assembly to appoint a suitable committee, whose duty it shall be,

"1. To consider whether the doctrine of our Confession concerning the final results of God's dealings with mankind, as set forth in Chapter xxxiii, Questions 29, 89, Larger Catechism, and elsewhere, is a complete and final expression of the teaching of Holy Scripture upon this subject.

"2. To propose any alterations or explanations in the statements of our Standards upon this subject which may seem to them advisable, and to report any such proposed changes to the succeeding General Assembly for its suitable action in the premises."

This overture was offered at one stated meeting, and put upon the docket for discussion at the next, at which time it received the votes of three ministers and two elders.

Now, if we had not taken this action, if we were not known in the church as fairly and openly committed to revision at these points, and as the earnest advocates of it

in these pages, we admit that we would be open to a charge of dishonesty. But a higher sense of duty has led us to this step,—at what risk and cost our brethren well know. It is due to us also to state that, before this movement in the Presbytery, several of its leading members were frankly written to. Our views were submitted and their advice asked. Also, when the overture was rejected, we offered in open Presbytery to advise with any committee, which they might wish to appoint, as to the course we ought to take. We endeavored to act in the matter in all good conscience before God and man. The Presbytery did not appoint any committee. And, although they rejected our overture, they passed this resolution unanimously, which is now upon their records. "While Presbytery is constrained to reject the overture offered by the Rev. Mr. Baker, it nevertheless would express its entire confidence in the integrity of his convictions and the honesty of his purpose."

We regret to have to say this much about our personal honesty in this matter. We know, too, how deceitful is the human heart, and that it is a small matter to be judged of men, and that God's judgments go far deeper than man's. But it seems to be due to ourselves and to the church to make this explanation of our position in this matter, in which, at the first view of some of our brethren, we may seem to be acting in a dishonorable way.

One thing more: We would ask them to remember that our position is unique. Other men have differed from the Confession, and sought to retain position in the church by showing that the divergence was not funda-

mental. We raise no such question. We do not believe, indeed, it to be half so fundamental as the divergences concerning the structure and inspiration of the Bible, now finding entrance and claiming toleration in the very highest circles of the church. But the question we are raising is this: Will the church tolerate one of her ministers in a conscientious endeavor to bring some of her ancient formulas to a fresh examination in the light of Scripture, and who puts his finger upon the point where he believes them to be wrong? Is she not bound, before she invites him to depart, or pronounces him a heretic, to calmly consider whether the thing proposed be of man or of God? Such an issue as this has not been decided. For ourselves, we can simply say again, that whenever the church shall authoritatively determine that no such movement is to be tolerated, or that there is no Scripture warrant for the points we have raised against the Confession, then we will be ready at once to withdraw, either at peace with the church, or under its ban, as God may make known to us His will.

SLANDER OF THE BRETHREN.

We are most surprised of all at this charge: "He indulges himself in gross and slanderous accusations of the ministry of his church, for professing to believe what they do not, and concealing their real opinions." This, he says, is a charge of "cowardice and hypocrisy." The only words of ours he quotes to prove it are these: "The church binds the conscience, and fetters liberty of investigation, by statements so severe that her ministers recoil from preaching them, and the large majority of

both ministers and members do not fairly believe them." This is all. No one will deny that the subscription required by the church does bind the conscience, and restrain liberty of investigation within certain limits. In the case of the formulas in question, the substance of which is above quoted, we of course affirm that they are severe beyond the truth. This is the staple of our indictment. But here comes in the "slander." We affirm that our ministers recoil from preaching them. So Dr. Schaff has testified. So every one knows. Does the editor of the *Occident* know of any of our ministers who faithfully preaches them? We do not. That paper is itself a preacher of righteousness on the Pacific coast. The editor professes to believe that a large proportion of his fellow-men stand on the edge of this inconceivable doom—unspeakable torments of body and soul, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell-fire forever. Some of those so imperilled are of his readers, his friends and neighbors. We have looked through his columns. We find there some good and useful reading—"Proofs of Inspiration," etc., a variety of church and current news, Family reading, Missionary intelligence, with some stories for children. The article next to the one assailing us is a very kindly notice of the death of Henry Ward Beecher, the arch-offender of the century against the dogma of which he is so tenacious. But we search in vain for any word of warning to the men around him exposed to this awful peril. The editor says he believes this eternal agony awaits them. Does he act as if he believed it? He *says* he believes. Doubtless he thinks so. He is mistaken. Faith, without

works, is dead. This is all we mean when we say that a large majority of our ministers and members do not fairly believe these statements. We mean they have no realizing conviction of their truth. They do not act as if they believed them. Moreover, we have no doubt that they recoil from them, because they do not believe they present the full truth about God and human destiny. They see that other aspects of the divine character and dealings are left out. There is no room for them. Therefore, if they are less honest toward the standards, it is because they seek to be more honest toward God and more true to His Word. Is this a slander of the brethren? This is what we have said, in explanation of the inconsistency between their preaching and their creed, again and again. We have said, indeed, that the church puts and keeps them in a false position. But we have apologized for *them*. In our issue of May, 1885, in remarking upon the overture we had introduced, we said:

"Two explanations of this inconsistency are possible: 1. Either the ministers of our church are not honest in their failure to stand by these statements in their preaching, or, 2. They have been led to see that they are not a complete and final expression of the teaching of Holy Scripture upon this subject. We much prefer the latter explanation. And if it be the true one, we cannot emphasize too strongly the obligation of the church to provide her ministry with doctrinal statements, to which they can adhere without evasion, and in the use of which they can commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Such has been the uniform tone of our remarks about our brethren. We submit whether it sounds like "wholesale slander."

And now as to the general charge that we are rebellious and harmful agitators, we beg to remind our brethren that a large proportion of our Presbyterian friends abroad have seen the necessity for some such action as we are urging. A large proportion of our own church confess that it must sooner or later come. The United Presbyterian Church of Great Britain sought relief some years ago in an explanatory statement, which takes off the edge of these severe statements to one subscribing them. An unworthy shrinking from the real issue! The Presbyteries in England have recently taken similar action. Prof. James A. Candlish, son of a famous sire, of the Free Church College in Glasgow, has just nearly carried an overture in his Presbytery, looking in the same general direction with our own. A majority of the ministers, and nearly all of the younger ones, voted for it. It was lost by only three votes among seventy-seven. The difference between his action and ours is simply that he states in more vague terms what we are definite about. He says our Eschatology fails to make room for the Scriptural conception of the Fatherhood of God, and of the provisions of His grace toward lost men. We put our finger on the spot where it fails. We say that it is vitiated by a wrong idea of the place and meaning of resurrection in the divine economy. To the vast majority of the race, at least up to this time, it makes resurrection to be doubled and confirmed retribution.* This is false to the Scriptural idea of death as

* We do not forget that a balance is made up on the side of mercy, by the view that heaven is mainly peopled with redeemed infants and imbeciles. But this is beyond the Confession. The last *Presbyterian Review* says it is against it.

the wages of sin, and of the grace involved in the provision to recover all men from the pit of death, into which they were cast "by the offense of one." And it is false to the great Scripture promises, which declare that some character of blessing has been opened up by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all mankind. Until the church has remedied this great wrong, there will continue to be this discrepancy between her creed and her inmost convictions, between her intellectual and spiritual insight, her stern repellent thoughts of God, and the humane and compassionate feelings His Spirit begets within her toward men. And until Prof. Candlish, and others who are prompted to lead in this movement, come to recognize this as the vital point at which the church has gone astray, they can only give us a vague reform and compromising explanations which cannot reach the root of the church's trouble, and can only heal her hurt but slightly.

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE.

WHO ARE THE PRISONERS?

In several passages in the Psalms and Prophets, a certain class is brought to view under the name "prisoners," "captives," "them that are bound." We quote a few instances.

Psalm cii. 18–22, R. V. This shall be written for the generation to come:

And a people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.

For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary;

From heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the sighing of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; (margin, Heb. *the children of death*);

That men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem;
When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms to serve the Lord.

Isaiah xlix. 8–10. Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish (raise up) the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. See also xlii. 7; lxi. 1–4; Zech. ix. 11, 12.

A study of these passages shows,

1. The deliverance spoken of is connected with the final and universal triumph of the Messiah's Kingdom.

2. That of which Isaiah xlix. speaks is definitely connected with a rescue of captives from the realms of death, by its quotation in Rev. vii. 16, 17. There the company who hunger and thirst no more, and whom the sun nor any heat can smite, because the Lamb is their leader and guide, is a company redeemed out of all nations who have evidently triumphed over death. That is but a meagre grasp of the Spirit's meaning which would limit, in any of these passages, the deliverance spoken of to an earthly captivity, such as the Babylonish, or to a spiritual bondage. This is doubtless included: for redemption from death is closely connected with redemption from

sin. But the "children of death," "prisoners in the pit," are, in the wide view, the multitudes of God's covenant people who, for their sins, have gone down to death and are held as captives in its prison-house. This is the ultimate meaning of these phrases as used in the Old Testament. And these passages look forward to the times of restitution of all things of which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The question still remains, however, Do not these promises apply only to the regenerate people of God? The answer is that most of these passages view these prisoners as having gone down into this captivity on account of their sins. The clearest and most emphatic prediction of their ransom from Sheol is that found in Hosea xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." The context shows that it was an Ephraim joined to his idols—an Israel who had destroyed himself by his sins, who was to be thus delivered.

An interpretation of the psalms and prophets which does not find a hope of resurrection in such passages, and which does not see that this hope covers the case of large classes of mankind, Jew and Gentile, who were consigned to Sheol for their sins, is not worthy of the name. It overlooks one of the most vital features of the Word of God, and one most essential to its correct interpretation. And, that not only sinners of the chosen people, but from Gentile nations, are among these rescued captives is plainly taught by such passages as Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 6; Ezek. xvi. 53–63, in which Moab, and Ammon, and Sodom are specified as to be restored from their captivity in the latter days.

NOTES ON CURRENT OPINIONS AND EVENTS.

ADVICE ASKED.—In obedience to a recommendation adopted by the General Assembly (see Minutes for 1878, p. 99), the Rev. L. C. Baker has requested the Presbytery of West Jersey to appoint a Committee to advise with him upon the following points.

1. If a minister of this church has been led to believe that a wrong interpretation of Scripture has crept into our system of doctrine at an important point, what constitutional right has he to agitate for its removal, and what duty in reference thereto is put upon him by his ordination vows?

2. Are the views which he has published from time to time in his magazine, called WORDS OF RECONCILIATION, irreconcilable with our system of doctrine, insomuch that any one holding them should withdraw from the Presbyterian Church.

Presbytery acceded to the request at its last stated meeting, and appointed such a Committee.

THE PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW. — We find in the April number of this representative Quarterly enough to justify the position we have taken, that it is high time the church should take up the question of amending her standards, and that a fair and honest discussion of the points we have raised against their eschatology should, not only be allowed, but encouraged. Prof. J. S. Candlish, of the Free Church, whose movement toward revision in the Presbytery of Glasgow, we noticed in our last number, contributes an able article on "Reformation Theology," in which he shows that, by reason of the enormous advance in knowledge in Biblical criticism and interpretation, in the fields of history, of science, and of philosophy, while the substance of all the leading doctrines is unaffected, "the form of statement may have in some cases to be changed, and some of the more particular parts of the old systems may have to be modified or given up." That he regards these required changes as of sufficient importance to call for church action is seen in his recent effort to induce his Presbytery to overture the Assembly "to appoint a committee to consider whether anything should be done to explain the sense in which the

church understands her Confession and formulas, or to make them more suitable to present needs, or to do otherwise, as to their wisdom may seem meet."

Prof. Briggs contributes a lengthy editorial note upon "The Westminster doctrine of the salvation of infants." By references to the history of the Assembly, and by numerous citations from the essays and sermons of the principal men engaged in framing these statements, he proves conclusively that they gave no countenance to the modern doctrine of universal infant salvation, or to the salvability of devout heathen. His words are,

"We are able to say that the Westminster divines were unanimous on this question of the salvation of elect infants only. We have examined the greater part of the writings of the Westminster divines, and have not been able to find any different opinion from the extracts we have given. The Presbyterian churches have departed from their standards on this question, and it is simple honesty to acknowledge it. We are at liberty to amend the Confession, but we have no right to distort it, or to pervert its grammatical or historical meaning." And as to the salvation of some heathen, which many brethren find room for under the phrase, "other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." he shows that by such incapables the Westminster divines meant "those who have not their normal faculties of mind, and so, like infants, are incapable of hearing or responding to the gospel call. The authors of the Confession had no thought of including the heathen in this class" . . . "It is contrary to the Westminster Confession to believe in the salvation of all infants, or to believe in the salvation of any of the heathen who are capable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." He alludes to a former article of Dr. Prentiss in the same Review which asserts that "this extension of salvation vastly beyond what the Westminster divines contemplated amounts to a revolution in theological opinion, all the more noteworthy from the quiet, decisive way in which it was accomplished, the general acquiesence in it, and also the apparent unconsciousness of its logical consequences."

Prof. Briggs concludes his article by saying: "If the church has failed thus far to advance to the inevitable consequences of this doctrine, it cannot refrain much longer from it. It must either recede to the Westminster position, or, having abandoned it for a new doctrine, justify it by evidence from Scripture, and make the reconstruction of the related doctrines that is necessarily involved. We do not hesitate to express our dissent from the Westminster Confession in this limitation of the divine electing grace. We are of opinion that God's electing grace saves all infants, and not a few of

the heathen. We base our right to differ from the Westminster divines on their own fundamental principle, that the electing grace of God is not tied to the administration of the ordinary means of grace."

We conclude this notice by quoting with pleasure Dr. Briggs' closing sentence in his remarks upon the labors of John Durie, and others in the seventeenth century, in behalf of Christian Union. "The disunion of Protestantism has continued long enough. It is high time that we should set our faces toward a realization of that ideal of Christian Union for which these heroes of the seventeenth century labored so faithfully and well."

To this we respond with a hearty Amen.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

An associate in the ministry for whom we have the highest respect writes to us as follows:

I do not suppose that it is possible for all to see alike on these momentous truths, especially when they are not revealed in all their fullness. I doubt whether it is possible, even now, to formulate a statement that shall contain a complete, final declaration of the entire truth concerning the last things. There are in some parts of Scripture some faint glimpses of other views than those t .at have been almost universally held, but they are not clear enough to base positive statements upon, and perhaps if we could see them clearly, we should find them to be in harmony with the old doctrines. There are p sit.ve statements of the punishment of the wicked, a punishment that is everlasting. There is no positive statement that any chance for repentance or the acceptance of Christ will be given after the resurrection. I do not think we can put into doctrinal statement that which is only an inference, or a hope of a human character, or a logical sequence of propositions that are not entirely scriptural and connected.

While I say these things, I should nevertheless like to see a little of the phraseology of our Confession and Catechism changed. It is not infallible, as God's word is, and the language of two hundred years ago most likely did not convey the same ideas to the men of those days that it does to us.

We publish this letter because of its calm and temperate tone, and because it presents, we think, the strongest point that can be made against our own views. It fairly represents the position of a large class of brethren whom we love and honor, and who regret our agitation of this subject.

The point is this. There are positive statements of Scripture of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. All passages which bear against these are non-positive, faint glimpses, and do not afford a sufficient basis for any doctrinal statement.

We remark just here. Admitting there are such positive statements, the question still remains: Are they fairly presented in our confessional statements that this punishment is to be "most grievous and unspeakable torments of soul and body, without intermission, with the devil and his angels in hell-fire forever?" And, if there are even "faint glimpses" of a wider hope, as our correspondent admits, ought the church to speak so positively upon this awful subject as our Confession speaks? And is she right in binding the consciences of her ministers to these statements? Even a "faint glimpse," an "inference," is sufficient to create some doubt. And any doubt here should make us pause.

But now as to the main point alleged, that this matter is settled for us by certain "positive statements."

1. We can find but *one* such apparent statement,—"These shall go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46). This, taken in connection with the previous sentence of the Divine Judge "Depart ye cursed into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (vs. 41), is the one passage which is decisive for so many minds. This is the main pillar among the proof-texts quoted in the Confession. A number of other passages seem to teach the same thing, but if it were not for the coloring borrowed from this passage they could not be regarded as positive. Our Lord upon several occasions, in giving private instruction to His disciples concerning the law of self-crucifixion as the way of life, told them that it was better for them to surrender one of their evil members, an eye of lust, or a hand of offence, than that the whole body should be cast into hell "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." But the uniform Old Testament use of these expressions discourages the thought that He used them to teach an endless torment in the fire of hell. They signify there complete destruction (Is. xxxiv. 8–11. Jer. vii. 20; xviii. 4. Ezek. xx. 47). And the first use of them in the New Testament by John the Baptist confirms this. He declares that the coming Messiah was about to purge His floor and to *burn up* the chaff with unquenchable fire. Whatever inferences therefore may be drawn from this class of passages in our Saviour's

teachings, they must be removed from the category of "positive statements of an eternal punishment of the wicked." The same thing is true of that strongest statement to be found in the Acts or the Epistles—2 Thess. i. 9. "Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His might." Here the punishment threatened is "destruction," not torment. And the class of sinners overtaken by this judgment are men living on the earth, and saying "peace and safety." There is no warrant for quoting it, as does our Confession, as a direct proof-text for the everlasting torment of sinners after their resurrection from the dead. We are right therefore in saying that the catalogue of "positive statements" should be reduced to the one in Matt. xxv. Let us look closely at this.

The common interpretation of it assumes (1) that Jesus taught the natural immortality of sinful men. He did teach their soul-survival. But soul-survival is not immortality. The only positive statement made by Him on this point implies the *destructibility* of the soul, with the body, in hell (Matt. x. 28). (2) That the judgment described is a post-resurrection scene, embracing in one assize all generations of men who have ever lived, and who are raised from the dead for the purposes of this judgment. And yet we are distinctly told at the outset of the discourse, that all these things, including the coming of the Son of Man in glory (xxiv. 29-34), should be fulfilled before that generation passed away. (3) It tacitly assumes that this warning of an everlasting punishment was spoken in the ears of the multitude, who were exposed to this infinite danger. And yet it forms part of a *private* instruction given to the disciples. Matthew tells us: "The disciples came to Him privately" to question Him about the sign of His coming and the end of the age. Mark limits it still further. "And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately," etc. (xiii. 4). We ask our brethren to reflect upon this. There is no proof that Jesus ever spake to the multitudes that thronged about Him, and who were the most concerned to know, of the inconceivable peril of an endless torment of soul and body in hell. Even this strongest passage was addressed to a few disciples, as were also the words in Matt. v. 29, 30, xviii. 9, Mark ix, etc. Is it conceivable that this tender lover of human souls would have been thus reticent, if the

common view of the meaning of His words were the true one? It may be said, He certainly instructed His disciples so to warn men. But, there is not a single passage in one of their recorded sermons in the Acts, nor in their epistles, which distinctly and positively warns men of this specific danger. The strongest passage in their words or writings we have already examined. This, and their other strong statements of the doom to which wicked men are exposed, fall in much more readily with the view of a positive destruction, than a positive endless existence in torment. We say, therefore, again that the "positive statements of an everlasting punishment of the wicked" stand or fall with this one in Matt. xxv. This is the only one that appears definite. This first rises to mind and comes out on the lips, whenever proof is sought for the old doctrine. And this we have seen to be far less positive than our correspondent assumes it to be. It describes, on the face of it, a pre-resurrection judgment of mankind, which began when our Lord was exalted to be the King and Judge of men, and which shall reach its consummation at the end of this age. It leaves the question still open whether the future resurrection of these condemned ones will not introduce some change in their condition, and open up a new administration of this Son of Man toward the countless generations of the dead. Moreover, the testimony of this passage is seen to be much less positive on the side of the old doctrine when we consider (1) that eminent scholars, like Tayler Lewis and Robert Young, insist that *aionion* never denotes *absolute*, but *relative* endlessness.

While for *kolasin* we have the authority of Aristotle, as quoted by Liddell and Scott, that it properly denotes *corrective* punishment, as distinguished from *retributive*, the word for which is *timoria*. The positiveness, therefore, of this passage is weakened from three directions. 1. Those who claim that the *kolasis* threatened is a "cutting off" from existence, in accordance with the primary meaning of the word. (2) Those who claim that it is not interminable but age-long. (3) Those who assert that its discipline is restorative. Without giving our own view upon the relative value of these interpretations, we refer to them now to show that a close study of the words reveals that this crucial passage is not so positive in its teaching as is commonly assumed. And yet, as we have seen, the whole fabric of the enormous doctrine of the everlasting torment in the fires of hell of all who, in any age or in any land, have died unsaved

rests for its main support upon this brief extract from the esoteric teaching of our Lord.

And now what is the sum of evidence on the other side which our correspondent counts but light, compared with this? What are these "faint glimpses" and remote allusions and inferences which furnish so slight a basis for any larger hope for the human race? This "positive teaching" stands confronted with,

1. All that Scripture, and especially Jesus, reveals of the fatherhood of God, of His far-reaching purposes, of His unfathomed love, of His forgiving grace, of the gift of the Son of His love, who was manifested to destroy the devil and all his works.

2. With the great germinal promises upon which the structure of revelation is built, which convey a title to at least some order of blessing to all the families of the earth, and with many hints and implied declarations that these promises cannot be annulled or defeated by death.

3. With specific promises to unregenerate peoples who have gone down to death, of subsequent blessing which could reach them only through recovery from death. As, for example, to rebellious Israel (Hosea xiii. 9–14, Ezek. xxxvii), to Egypt and Assyria (Is. xix. 25), to Moab and Ammon (Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 6), to Sodom and Samaria (Ezek. xvi. 53–63). These passages imply that death cannot debar forever all opportunity of blessing to these classes of mankind. This also is the implied teaching of 1 Peter iii. 19, iv. 6.

4. With what Scripture teaches of the essential character of resurrection, as a recovery from the penal condition of death, which is sin's wages, and as the fruit of Christ's redeeming work. Would He "make alive" these countless masses upon whom "death came by one man," merely for purposes of aggravated and unending torment? Is this the way that "grace much more abounds?" Is this like the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe," (1 Tim. iv. 10), and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; who hath reconciled all things unto himself, and is gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth, and unto whom every created thing in Heaven, and on earth, and under the earth is to give exalted praise? We cannot now stop to explain what we believe all these passages mean, nor how they are to be adjusted in that full-rounded orb of truth which

shows us our God to be both Love and a consuming fire. The past numbers of this magazine have been devoted to this. We only wish here to show that the mass of Scriptural evidence to be set alongside of the "positive teaching" to which our correspondent refers is not the vague and light thing which he supposes it to be. The strongest kind of evidence often is that which is circumstantial. And so the chosen method of Scripture concerning the deep things of God is that of suggestion. The hidden truths, like the veins of gold in the rock, are the most precious. They must be searched for. And we are sure that no man can study deeply and prayerfully the unfolding of God's mind toward lost men, beginning with the first great promises, and tracing it through the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, until the Lord Jesus comes to reveal His mind and heart in greater perfectness, without being convinced that the hints of larger blessing and wider hope are sufficient to cast at least a grave doubt over that long-accepted, positive interpretation which has darkened the face of our Father God, and shrouded the future of an immense portion of the human race in a lurid night of unending agony and despair. And if there be even a doubt, this is reason enough why the church should cease to be positive, as her Confession unhesitatingly is, upon a matter of such awful import, and why she should no longer compel her ministers to subscribe to that which may be a misunderstanding or a perversion, and why she should tolerate her servants in the further reverent investigation and discussion of a matter so vital in her testimony from God to men, and where a mistake so affects His honor and their highest welfare.

A Presbyterian Elder who has evidently missed some of our articles upon the subject writes:

As to the influence of the New or Andover Theology upon Missions, I believe with you that it does not hold fast to the Scriptural idea of future punishment. Right or wrong, your ideas come more into line with the teachings of God's Word. It seems to me that, if the Church could be brought to feel that her work is to push on the cause, and to gather out from all nations the elect, in order to prepare the way for that glorious restitution which is to be accomplished by His appearing, and would preach the doctrine of immediate suffering and of an immediate hell, instead of remote final judgment and punishment, I cannot see where the "nerve"

would be cut. I may have missed your article if you have treated the subject *specially*, but if you have not done so thoroughly, would it not be well to do so?

We have repeatedly discussed the points raised by our correspondent, and would refer him specially to the leading article in the November number of Vol. I., on "The Basis of Foreign Missions," and to the article in the November number of Vol. II., entitled "Andover on Trial." Our views on this whole subject have been frequently presented, and may be summarized as follows:

The great salvation wrought out for mankind through the death and resurrection of Christ, is to be fulfilled through a chosen seed of which He is the Head, in which all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and which is now being gathered out of all nations. The Scriptures constantly speak of a supreme crisis in the world's history, under the terms the "manifestation" the "revelation" of Jesus Christ, and of the saints with Him, as the period when there shall be a new and marvellous opening out of that administration of judgment and of grace upon which He entered when God raised Him from the dead, but the fact of which is now hidden from the eyes of men. The church, however, has made a great mistake in supposing that the work of the individual judgment of mankind was to be postponed to that crisis, which most Christians believe to be post-millenial and far-distant. Hence the "New Theology" insists that room must be made beyond the bounds of death and before this final judgment, for such merciful dealings toward weak and ignorant souls, and especially the heathen, as are required by what the Scriptures teach of the merciful character of God, and the wide scope of His grace in the redemption of the world. This view is at once confronted with the serious objection, "Why then need we be so earnest in our efforts to carry the gospel to the heathen now?"

The solution of the difficulty is to be found

1. In the recognition of the fact, so plainly implied in the words of Jesus and of His apostles, that His judgment of the world in righteousness began when God raised Him up, and made Him to be both Lord and Christ.

2. In the location of the threatened punishment in hell where His words place it, as something awaiting sinful men after death, and before resurrection.

3. In the acknowledgment that, while resurrection, by the laws of life and the law of God, must sort men according to character, and place all who are not heirs of eternal life again under trial and judgment and liability to "the second death," it yet belongs essentially on the side of God's redemptive working, and cannot be to any class an unmitigated curse.

4. The true key, therefore, to the mystery of the subject lies in this right view of resurrection. It reveals that there is an immediate, definite "damnation of hell" awaiting every class of sinful men, whether in Christian or heathen lands, from which they need immediate deliverance through the Only Name by which they can be saved. No "future probation" can make up the loss to those who now reject Christ, or even to those who die in their sins in ignorance of Him. And yet resurrection, which is essentially a second gift of life to those whose lives were forfeited by sin, while it cannot bring another opportunity to recover what has been lost forever, must yet bring with it the opportunities which inhere in reinstatement in life, and in that estate in manhood out of which the wicked are ejected. Christ, and His risen Saints, as the first-born from the dead, are a chosen seed through whom the power of resurrection shall reach and recover, each in their own order, from death and Hades the generations of the dead. In these future administrations of His recovering power and grace, lies whatever hope the future may contain for any class of men who die unsaved.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

From a subscriber in Massachusetts :

I am very glad that your Magazine came under my notice. I rejoice that you are opening out these truths. The old theology has borne heavily on my mind until later years, and I never could reconcile it with the character of a God of Justice, Mercy, and Love.

From a clergyman and author in the same State :

The articles in the March number on "the Law of the First-born" and the "Battle of Life" are admirable. So is your uniform

view of the redemptive place of resurrection. May you wax stronger and stronger.

In reference to our comments upon Dr. Halley's examination before the Presbytery of Troy, a gentleman of that city writes :

My pastor has just shown to me the February number of your magazine . . . I was present at the examination and heard the question and the answer. I was *not* pleased with the answer, nor am I in sympathy with the spirit of those who have paraded it as a creditable and praiseworthy utterance. I *am* fully in sympathy with your comments on the matter. Please mail to me a copy of that number.

The answer of Dr. Halley, referred to, assumed that the only honorable course in any Presbyterian minister who found his views diverging at any important point from those of his church, was at once to leave it. Our criticism was that every minister of that church was bound by his ordination vows to seek to promote its *purity :* and therefore if he comes to see that it has gone wrong, or has mis-stated the truth at any point, he has no right to leave it without making an honest effort to set it right.

From a Presbyterian Pastor :

I have read with great interest and satisfaction your February number It does seem as if you are hewing out standing room in the Presbyterian Church which we may rightfully and conscientiously occupy. God speed you in your work. I need not assure you that I am yours for any assistance I can at any time render.

"W. L. M." writes to us from Chicago :

A month or two ago I saw a notice of WORDS OF RECONCILIATION, in the *Chicago Tribune,* and ordered it through McClurg and Co., of this city. Expecting a small volume or pamphlet, I was somewhat amazed to receive two good sized volumes, for 1886 and 1887, costing nearly four times as much as I expected to pay.

I began reading and scarcely left them until I had finished both volumes, and now I am reading them over again, and consider that I did'nt pay one fourth as much as they are worth to me. Are you still publishing the magazine? If so, I want to subscribe for it including the back numbers of this year. I cannot get them too soon.

A Home Missionary writes:

I have read with much interest a copy of WORDS OF RECONCILIATION. I wish I could afford to take it. I am pastor of four weak, neglected Presbyterian churches, and have been eight years in Home Missionary service in the West. I know that enough money is wasted in supporting weak denominational churches in this country to supply the heathen world with the gospel in a few years. But what is the remedy? It would be folly to tear down unless we can rebuild the structure in an improved form. But in the full light of Scripture we know that denominations must cease to exist, when due attention is given to the authority of the Word, and the "Spirit of all truth," by which all believers are one in Christ Jesus. Whether union will begin by a work within denominations, or outside of them, is yet a question. May the blessing of the Lord be with your work! I unite with you in the prayer that the great Head of the church will draw His people together. Sincerely yours in the joyful service of the gospel.

A subscriber in Minneapolis writes:

I have been interested and instructed by your Monthly in the past and do not wish to be without it in the future.

Another from Newark, N. J.

I cannot tell you how much I value your Magazine, nor how much I admire the spirit in which the articles are written. I hope you will live to see with your own eyes the unity you are so earnestly seeking to bring about. May God speed your work.

From a friend "in sympathy:"

I am very glad that the Presbyterian Church has a faithful witness within its limits. I am sure a large majority of your members do not reflect upon what these portions of your creed really mean. I know your work must often be lonely and uphill work, but I am sure the Lord, whom you are seeking to honor, must honor you with a blessed consciousness of His approval. Whatever mistakes you may have made, you have at least been loyal to this, that you have tried to get people to think well of God; so that the reward that comes from Him is sure what ever man may think.